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- New York Times Eliminating Public Editor Position
- CAMERA Featured Letter-Writer
- ABC TV Popular Series Quantico Stops Demonizing Israel
- USA Today Omits Israeli Peace Offers While Covering 'Peace Push'
- More Missing Peace from The Washington Post
- New York Times Downplays Clash as Demonstration
- Reuters Marks Six Day War Jubilee With Skewed Jerusalem Infographic
- Politico: Convicted Palestinian Terrorist is an 'Urbane Diplomat'
- Where's the Coverage? New Palestinian Mayor is a Murderer
- France 24 Arabic Headline Fail on Jerusalem Attack

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- ▶ **Christian Issues**
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- ▶ **Errors & Corrections**
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March 20, 2006

by Alex Safian, PhD

Study Decrying "Israel Lobby" Marred by Numerous Errors

Updated April 6: Rebutting charges of expulsion and massacre

A new study by Harvard professor Stephen Walt and University of Chicago professor John Mearsheimer charges that the "Israel lobby" has distorted the foreign policy of the United States to the point of serious damage to U.S. interests. Perhaps anticipating that their claims might be controversial, the authors attempt to reassure any who might doubt them:

Some readers will find this analysis disturbing, but the facts recounted here are not in serious dispute among scholars.

In fact, even a cursory examination of [The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy](#) reveals that it is riddled with errors of fact, logic and omission, has inaccurate citations, displays extremely poor judgement regarding sources, and, contrary to basic scholarly standards, ignores previous serious work on the subject. The bottom line: virtually every word and argument is, or ought to be, in "serious dispute."

In other words, a student who submitted such a paper would flunk.

According to the report, which is posted on Harvard's Kennedy School of Government website:

The U.S. national interest should be the primary object of American foreign policy. For the past several decades, however, and especially since the Six Day War in 1967, the centerpiece of U.S. Middle East policy has been its relationship with Israel. The combination of unwavering U.S. support for Israel and the related effort to spread democracy throughout the region has inflamed Arab and Islamic opinion and jeopardized U.S. security.

This situation has no equal in American political history. Why has the United States been willing to set aside its own security in order to advance the interests of another state? One might assume that the bond between the two countries is based on shared strategic interests or compelling moral imperatives. As we show below, however, neither of those explanations can account for the remarkable level of material and diplomatic support that the United States provides to Israel.

Instead, the overall thrust of U.S. policy in the region is due almost entirely to U.S. domestic politics, and especially to the activities of the "Israel Lobby." Other special interest groups have managed to skew U.S. foreign policy in directions they favored, but no lobby has managed to divert U.S. foreign policy as far from what the American national interest would otherwise suggest, while simultaneously convincing Americans that U.S. and Israeli interests are essentially identical.

Why does America support Israel?

Is it true that U.S. policy in the Middle East, and specifically our support for Israel, is due almost entirely to the activities of the "Israel Lobby?" The authors are hardly the first to so argue, though one wouldn't know it from reading their report, which, as noted, ignores all prior serious work on the subject, including the seminal book refuting such claims, the late Professor A.F.K. Organski's *The \$36 Billion Bargain: Strategy and Politics in U.S. Assistance to Israel*.

Though the authors do cite Organski's book once, on the strategic importance of Israel during the cold war, they entirely ignore his main point, which is that the primary reason for U.S. support of Israel can't possibly be the Jewish vote, or Jewish political contributions, or the activities of any pro-Israel lobby, for the simple reason that, as polls indicate, Jews were just as pro-Israel before 1970, when U.S. support for Israel was minimal, as they were after 1970, when U.S. support for Israel grew rapidly. As Organski put it in his preface:

In 1983 I ran across a Congressional Research Service series on assistance to Israel from 1948 to 1983, and I was surprised by what I saw. The numbers told an important story. Assistance to Israel before 1970 had been very low. After 1972 levels shot up. The data fairly screamed that American Jews could not have been responsible for U.S. policy, for it is elementary that one cannot explain a variable with a constant, and American Jews had been in favor of assistance all along...

Now, the president in 1970 was Richard Nixon, a Republican who knew very well that overwhelmingly Democratic and left-leaning American Jews had already voted against him in large numbers and would do so again in 1972. So what happened in 1970 that convinced Nixon, the arch practitioner of *realpolitik*, to press for increased support for Israel? Here we can turn to another seminal work on U.S./Israel relations, *Israel: The Embattled Ally*, by the late Harvard professor, Nadav Safran. According to Safran the turning point in U.S./Israel relations was the so-called Black September crisis, in which the Palestine Liberation Organization, assisted by invading Syrian tanks, and in connivance with the Soviet Union, attempted to overthrow and assassinate Jordan's King Hussein, an ally of the United States (see pages 451-456). Had these two Soviet clients succeeded in taking Jordan, they would have created an arc of radical Soviet client states pointing right at the Persian Gulf, thereby threatening western oil supplies. As Safran put it:

In the White House conception, Jordan under King Hussein ... constituted an important buffer separating the pro-Soviet radical regime of Egypt from those of Syria and Iraq, and all three of them from oil-rich, friendly Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf principalities. The fall of the Jordanian regime would bring about a solid pro-Soviet bloc from the Euphrates to the Nile ...

Safran continued:

... [when] the Syrians captured Irbid, an important junction of roads linking Jordan, Syria, Iraq and Israel ... King Hussein sent additional urgent appeals for American and British help. Consultations with the British ... revealed that they not only refused to intervene militarily ... but [also] strongly counseled against American intervention. Similar opposition was expressed by other European allies. The President ordered Kissinger to work out contingency plans for a joint American-Israeli intervention ...

Confident of American and Israeli support, King Hussein was able to commit all his forces to battle; fearful of that support, specifically of a flanking attack by massed Israeli tank columns, the Syrians withdrew, and Jordan was saved. According to Safran this affair had a profound effect on U.S./Israel relations:

The Jordanian episode had a **far-reaching effect on the American attitude toward Israel** and the Arab-Israeli conflict... the President ... was deeply impressed by the determination shown by the Israelis **at a time when America's formal allies had quit on him**.

... the Jordanian episode drove home to the President and some of his advisers ... **the value for the United States of a strong Israel**.(emphasis added)

Needless to say, Safran's work was also ignored by the authors.

Has support for Israel damaged U.S. interests, or caused terrorists to target us?

Of course, the authors don't just argue that U.S. support for Israel was due to the pro-Israel lobby rather than U.S. interests, they also argue that this support has in fact damaged U.S. interests. They claim for example, that because of its support for Israel the U.S. is targeted by terrorists:

... the United States has a terrorism problem in good part because it is so closely allied with Israel, not the other way around. U.S. support for Israel is not the only source of anti- American terrorism, but it is an important one, and it makes winning the war on terror more difficult. There is no question, for example, that many al Qaeda leaders, including bin Laden, are motivated by Israel's presence in Jerusalem and the plight of the Palestinians. According to the U.S. 9/11 Commission, bin Laden explicitly sought to punish the United States for its policies in the Middle East, including its support for Israel, and he even tried to time the attacks to highlight this issue.

While the 9/11 Commission report did mention Israel as a factor in the attacks, there is much evidence to argue against the assertion, and they certainly did not point to Israel as the major factor in provoking the attacks. Indeed, according to documents cited by experts on Al Qaeda, such as Rohan Gunaratna, the group attacked the United States on 9/11 (and before) not primarily because of our support for Israel, but because of our support for Saudi Arabia and other "moderate" Arab countries. As Gunaratna explains in his book *Inside Al Qaeda: Global Network of Terror*, after Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait and threatened Saudi Arabia, bin Laden was horrified that the Saudis were considering a U.S. offer to send troops to protect the Kingdom. Bin Laden urged against what he saw as sacrilege, and offered to protect the Kingdom with his Afghan *mujahidin*, but the Saudis turned him down and invited in the Americans. For inviting in the infidels, the Saudi rulers would never be forgiven by bin Laden. Gunaratna quoted from bin Laden's key *fatwa* on the subject:

Ignoring the divine shariah law; depriving people of their legitimate rights; allowing the Americans to occupy the land of the two Holy Places [Mecca and Medina] ... the regime has torn off its legitimacy...

Clearly after belief (iman) there is no more important duty than pushing the Americans out of the holy land [Arabia]... There is no precondition for this duty and the enemy must be fought with one's best abilities.

Al Qaeda's aim is to restore the caliphate (the unitary Arab Islamic state that existed in the days of Muhammed and his followers), but they understand that as long as the United States props up Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait

and Egypt and Jordan, with weapons and soldiers and financial support, and the promise of military intervention if necessary, these regimes are unlikely to fall. A key example of such regime resilience was seen in Egypt after the assassination of Sadat in 1981 by radical Islamists, who thought that with the leader gone the regime would fall. Instead the regime survived and launched a brutal crackdown, decimating Egypt's Islamist movement. Among those imprisoned, but eventually released, was a young man named Ayman al-Zawahiri, who later rose to become Osama bin Laden's deputy and the operational leader of Al Qaeda. The lesson learned by Islamist leaders from the Sadat assassination was clear – with a powerful U.S. active and engaged in the Middle East, the supported regimes would not fall. There would be no caliphate, therefore, until the U.S. is humiliated and driven from the Middle East, at which point the corrupt regimes will crumble into the waiting hands of Al Qaeda.

Thus the earlier Al Qaeda attacks against the United States, in Saudi Arabia, in Kenya and Tanzania, in Yemen, and finally on the U.S. homeland on 9/11. These attacks had nothing to do with Israel and everything to do with U.S. support for *Arab* regimes. It should be noted also that Al Qaeda never even tried to attack an Israeli target, much less Israel itself, until *after* 9/11.

Israel allegedly a bad ally

In their efforts to prove their at best exceptionally flimsy case the authors also argue that Israel is a bad ally. For example, they allege, Israel has compromised sensitive U.S. military technology:

... Israel has provided sensitive U.S. military technology to potential U.S. rivals like China, in what the U.S. State Department Inspector General called "a systematic and growing pattern of unauthorized transfers."

What they don't tell readers is that after the State Department report was released its credibility was shredded. Richard Clarke, for example, then the official in the State Department responsible for overseeing arms transfers, and later President Clinton's counter-terrorism chief, stated there was one, minor improper transfer, not a pattern of them:

Under President Bush, Mr. Clarke served as Assistant Secretary of State for political and military affairs. In 1992, he was accused by the State Department's Inspector General of looking the other way as Israel transferred American military technology to China.

"There was an allegation that we hadn't investigated a huge body of evidence that the Israelis were involved in technology transfers," Mr. Clarke said. "In fact, we had investigated it. I knew more about it than anyone. We found one instance where it was true. The Israelis had taken aerial refueling technology we sold them and sold it to a Latin American country. We caught them, and they admitted they had done it." (*New York Times*, Feb. 1, 1999)

And an article in the [American Journalism Review](#) raised further serious questions about the reliability of the IG's report:

... a series of interviews with officials in the Defense Department, State Department and CIA leaves no doubt that there are major and bitter disagreements about whether the intelligence reports about Israel were as conclusive as some claimed. For example, a senior Defense Department official who examined both the classified and unclassified versions of the IG report, as well as the raw intelligence reports collected by Funk to assemble his study, said firmly that the "IG abjectly misrepresents the intent and bottom line of the documents upon which his report was based." And a former government official who had access to the raw intelligence charged that the IG report was politicized. "The IG report," he said, "was a dumping ground for anyone who wanted to get their digs in on Israel." (May 1992)

In the same vein, the authors also charge that Israel passed to the Soviet Union information it received from convicted spy Jonathan Pollard, supposedly to get more exit visas for Soviet Jews. But this claim, which originated in an extremely controversial sentencing memorandum submitted by Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger, is known to be false. This is what Prof. Angelo Codevilla (a former Senior Staff Member of the Senate Intelligence Committee and intelligence specialist) had to say about the charge in an interview:

But back to the issue of what Pollard is being punished for. The indictment that he agreed to plead guilty to did not charge him with any breach of sources or methods. It did not charge him with giving away a room full of anything. After the plea bargain had been consummated and before sentencing, there was an *ex parte* submission to the Judge by Caspar Weinberger. This memorandum was entirely outside the indictment. Its contents have never been made public. Nor have they been shared with the Senate Intelligence Committee or the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board or the Intelligence Oversight Board. But this memo contained the lie that Pollard caused the deaths of countless U.S. agents. **It also reportedly said the Israelis sold part of the information to the Soviet Union. All of these things are not only untrue, they were known by Weinberger not to be true.** (*Washington Weekly*, Jan. 11, 1999)

Undermining the moral case for Israel

The authors also try to undermine the moral case for supporting Israel, arguing, for example, that it is not, and has never been, the underdog in the Middle East conflict. Thus, they claim that:

Contrary to popular belief, the Zionists had larger, better-equipped and better-led forces during the 1948-1949 War of Independence.

This claim is simply laughable. Consider, for example, the relative strengths of the Israeli forces and the Arab forces *arrayed against them* during the first critical weeks of the war:

	Tanks	Aircraft	Artillery	Troops
Israel	3	35	5	28,000
Arabs (not including regular Palestinian units)	270	300	150	35,000

(From *Arab-Israeli Wars*, A.J. Barker)

Thus, contrary to the authors, and in contrast to the invading Arabs, Israel had essentially no tanks, barely any artillery pieces, and few if any aircraft.

As for Israel being better led, the authors are apparently unaware that the invading Arab forces were professional armies, while the Israeli forces facing them were no better than militias, with experience only in small unit operations. Just how foolish the authors' claims are can be seen by looking, for example, at the Jordanian army, which was led by a highly experienced British officer, General Sir John Bagot Glubb, along with roughly 40 other British officers serving in senior ranks. At the time Israel simply had nothing to compare to this level of experience and professionalism.

How then did the Israelis win? Quite simply they were able to win because they were fighting for their lives, unlike the Arab forces, who could lose and go home, and because the Arab leaders did not trust each other and often acted at cross purposes.

The authors also try to undermine Israel's moral standing by citing seemingly damaging quotes from Israeli leaders. They claim, for example, that Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion stated that:

After the formation of a large army in the wake of the establishment of the state, we shall abolish partition and expand to the whole of Palestine.

The authors are a little naive, and are apparently unaware that there is a whole "industry" of fake Zionist quotes, both on anti-Israel websites, but also in many seemingly respectable books. Too bad, then, for the authors, that they didn't check this "quote" more carefully. Here's the actual protocol of the relevant part of the meeting that the above alleged quote is based upon:

Mr. Ben-Gurion: The starting point for a solution of the question of the Arabs in the Jewish State is, in his view, the need to prepare the ground for an Arab-Jewish agreement; he supports [the establishment of] the Jewish State [on a small part of Palestine], not because he is satisfied with part of the country, but on the basis of the assumption that after we constitute a large force following the establishment of the state – we will cancel the partition [of the country between Jews and Arabs] and we will expand throughout the Land of Israel.

Mr. Shapira [a JAE member]: By force as well?

Mr. Ben-Gurion: [No]. Through mutual understanding and Jewish-Arab agreement. So long as we are weak and few the Arabs have neither the need nor the interest to conclude an alliance with us... And since the state is only a stage in the realization of Zionism and it must prepare the ground for our expansion throughout the whole country through Jewish-Arab agreement – we are obliged to run the state in such a way that will win us the friendship of the Arabs both within and outside the state.(Efraim Karsh, "Falsifying the Record: Benny Morris, David Ben-Gurion and the 'Transfer' Idea," *Israel Affairs*, V4, No. 2, Winter 1997, p52-53)

In other words, Ben-Gurion was stating the opposite of what the authors would have their readers believe.

Unfortunately for the authors, they also "quoted" Ben-Gurion a second time, here apparently supporting brutal measures to expel Palestinians:

...the Zionists had to expel large numbers of Arabs from the territory that would eventually become Israel. There was simply no other way to accomplish their objective. Ben-Gurion saw the problem clearly, writing in 1941 that "it is impossible to imagine general evacuation [of the Arab population] without compulsion, and brutal compulsion."

Amusingly enough, in this case the authors' own citation undermines their claim. They refer to a Palestinian author, Nur Masalha, and to the book *Righteous Victims*, by Israeli Benny Morris. Now either they never really checked the latter, or they are trying to fool their readers, for this is how Morris actually recounts the quote:

"Complete transfer without compulsion – and ruthless compulsion, at that – is hardly imaginable." Some – Circassians, Druze, Bedouin, Shi'ites, tenant farmers, and landless laborers – could be persuaded to leave. But "the majority of the Arabs could hardly be expected to leave voluntarily within the short period of time which can materially affect our problem." He concluded that the Jews should not "discourage other people, British or American, who favour transfer from advocating this course, but we should in no way make it part of our programme." (*Righteous Victims*, p 169)

In other words, if you take seriously the authors' own citation, it disproves their claim. (I should note also that, just like Mearsheimer and Walt, Masalha somehow manages to omit that inconvenient part of Ben-Gurion's statement where the Israeli leader argues *against* adopting any policy of transfer.)

Of course David Ben-Gurion is not the only Israeli Prime Minister the authors criticize. They also go after former Prime Minister Ehud Barak, claiming, based entirely on secondary sources, that his peace offer to the Palestinians was not generous at all:

...no Israeli government has been willing to offer the Palestinians a viable state of their own. Even Prime Minister Ehud Barak's purportedly generous offer at Camp David in July 2000 would only have given the Palestinians a disarmed and dismembered set of "Bantustans" under de facto Israeli control.

This claim about "bantustans," or cantons, was directly contradicted by *the* primary source, Ambassador Dennis Ross, President Clinton's chief Middle East negotiator and the one person who was in on all the negotiations. According to Ross:

... the Palestinians would have in the West Bank an area that was contiguous. **Those who say there were cantons, completely untrue. It was contiguous...** And to connect Gaza with the West Bank, there would have been an elevated highway, an elevated railroad, to ensure that there would be not just safe passage for the Palestinians, but free passage. (Fox News, April 21, 2002)

In addition to falsely criticizing Ben-Gurion and Barak, the authors also try to link Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to war crimes:

[the IDF] was also complicit in the massacre of 700 innocent Palestinians at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps following its invasion of Lebanon in 1982, and an Israeli investigatory commission found then-Defence Minister Sharon "personally responsible" for these atrocities.

In fact, while the [Kahan Commission](#) did find that Sharon bore "personal responsibility," it is clear from the rest of the report that the authors misunderstood this reference, which was in contrast to Ministerial responsibility. In the latter a ministry makes a serious mistake, and the Minister, though unaware, must take responsibility, since he heads the ministry. With personal responsibility, the Minister himself made the mistake. Sharon indeed was found to have made mistakes, but he was found to be only indirectly responsible for the outcome. To quote from the report:

Contentions and accusations were advanced that even if I.D.F. personnel had not shed the blood of the massacred, **the entry of the Phalangists into the camps had been carried out with the prior knowledge that a massacre would be perpetrated there and with the intention that this should indeed take place;** and therefore all those who had enabled the entry of the Phalangists into the camps should be regarded as accomplices to the acts of slaughter and sharing in direct responsibility. **These accusations too are unfounded. We have no doubt that no conspiracy or plot was entered into between anyone from the Israeli political echelon or from the military echelon in the I.D.F. and the Phalangists, with the aim of perpetrating atrocities in the camps.... No intention existed on the part of any Israeli element to harm the non-combatant population in the camps.** ... Before they entered the camps and also afterward, the Phalangists requested I .D.F. support in the form of artillery fire and tanks, but **this request was rejected by the Chief of Staff in order to prevent injuries to civilians.** It is true that I.D.F. tank fire was directed at sources of fire within the camps, but this was in reaction to fire directed at the I.D.F. from inside the camps. **We assert that in having the Phalangists enter the camps, no intention existed on the part of anyone who acted on behalf of Israel to harm the non-combatant population, and that the events that followed did not have the concurrence or assent of anyone from the political or civilian echelon who was active regarding the Phalangists' entry into the camps....** If it indeed becomes clear that those who decided on the entry of the Phalangists into the camps should have foreseen - from the information at their disposal and from things which were common knowledge - that there was danger of a massacre, and no steps were taken which might have prevented this danger or at least greatly reduced the possibility that deeds of this type might be done, **then those who made the decisions and those who implemented them are indirectly responsible for what ultimately occurred, even if they did not intend this to happen** and merely disregarded the anticipated danger. A similar indirect responsibility also falls on those who knew of the decision; it was their duty, by virtue of their position and their office, to warn of the danger, and they did not fulfill this duty. It is also not possible to absolve of such indirect responsibility those persons who, when they received the first reports of what was happening in the camps, did not rush to prevent the continuation of the Phalangists' actions and did not do everything within their power to stop them. (Emphasis added)

Adding to their "war crimes" bill of indictment, the authors also charge that Israel committed large-scale atrocities against captured Egyptian soldiers in the 1956 and 1967 wars, and in 1967 expelled hundreds of thousands of Arabs from captured territories:

The IDF also murdered hundreds of Egyptian prisoners-of-war both in the 1956 and 1967 wars. In 1967, it expelled between 100,000 and 260,000 Palestinians from the newly-conquered West Bank, and drove 80,000 Syrians from the Golan Heights.

In fact, there is credible evidence that in the 1956 war a unit of Israeli soldiers, fighting behind enemy lines, did execute some Egyptians POW's. Such actions are inexcusable. But that's no excuse for Walt and Mearsheimer to vastly exaggerate the numbers involved, and the number of incidents involved. In particular, there is no credible evidence that such atrocities occurred in the 1967 war. The proof cited by Walt and Mearsheimer, an article by Israeli journalist Gabi Bron, doesn't say what they claim. This seems to be another example in which the authors simply copied an anti-Israel charge and the accompanying citation, without actually checking it for themselves.

Genuine scholars might have wanted to ask Bron exactly what he had witnessed, and whether, as claimed by others, he had really seen a massacre. Needless to say, the authors didn't do this. However, historian Michael

Oren, researching the 1967 war, did ring up Gabi Bron. He wasn't that hard to find, having become over the years a rather prominent journalist in Israel. And here, according to Oren, is what Bron had to say:

The one hundred and fifty POWs were not shot, and there were no mass murders... In fact, we helped prisoners, gave them water, and in most cases just sent them in the direction of the Suez Canal. (*New Republic*, July 23, 2001)

That is, the key source used by Walt and Mearsheimer to substantiate claims of Israeli massacres during the 1967 war denies that any such thing happened.

As well, contemporaneous dispatches from reporters present at the scene, both foreign and Israeli, gave no hint of any massacre or untoward behavior towards POWs. Neither did the photographers present record any such thing, as the images below show quite clearly:



June 7, 1967: Egyptian POWs being rounded up outside El Arish (Shabtai Tal)



June 7, 1967: Israeli soldier guards Egyptian POW's at El Arish (Shabtai Tal)

The photographers also recorded Israeli doctors tending to wounded POWs. Why the Israelis would bother to provide advanced medical care to POWs after trying to massacre them is unclear:



June 26, 1967: Wounded POW receives care at the hospital in the Atlit POW compound in Israel. (Moshe Pridan)

Some of the wounded Egyptian POWs bade a friendly goodbye as they were being repatriated to Egypt:



July 31, 1967: After Israeli treatment wounded Egyptian POWs are carried to a Red Cross ambulance plane for the trip to Cairo.



July 31, 1967: In Red Cross ambulance plane a wounded Egyptian POW says goodbye to an Israeli.

As for alleged expulsions, the authors again greatly distort and exaggerate what happened. Most if not all of the West Bank residents who fled to the East Bank (ie, Jordan) after the war left of their own free will, usually because they were originally from the East Bank, or were pensioners or civil servants who were afraid that if they stayed they would lose their Jordanian income.

And, as the *New York Times* reported (June 11, 1967), Jordanian radio broadcasts urged the people not to flee, clearly indicating that it was a matter of choice rather than compulsion:

... the refugees are on the move in spite of repeated Jordanian radio broadcasts that say:

"To the Arabs of the West Bank, do not desert your homes. Be patient. Be men and do not desert your homes. Be patient. Do not create another refugee problem."

In addition, when the Arab regimes charged at the UN that Israel was expelling thousands of people from the West Bank, a *New York Times* reporter looked into the matter, interviewing numerous Palestinian residents and finding no supporting evidence whatsoever:

At no time during a number of long talks with Arabs in this area was anything said to support Arab charges at the United Nations that thousands had been forced to cross the Jordan River from the west bank area occupied by the Israelis... [A Nablus resident] like other persons questioned, said nothing about Jordanians being forced eastward. He commented that many thousands had gone, but said he expected them to come back if the Israelis would permit it. (War Brings Problems for '48 Palestine Refugees, *New York Times*, June 15, 1967)

Even the United Nations, which is rarely known to tilt towards Israel, found little support for the expulsion claims in a [detailed report](#) filed by the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Nils-Goran Gussing. (Note: The web version of this report contains some transcription errors that have been corrected below against the official printed version.) According to the report:

46. In letters circulated to the Security Council [see S/7975, S/8004, S/8110, S/8115 and S/8117], Jordan complains in general terms about Israel attempts to create "yet another Arab exodus", and in precise detail about the expulsion of specific numbers of inhabitants and about intimidation of the population, for example, by dynamiting houses in Nablus...

48. On the first issue, affecting the West Bank as a whole, the Special Representative finds difficulty in defining what constitutes "expulsion" or "use of force" in relation to the movement of populations. During his visit to the area, the Special Representative received no specific reports indicating that persons had been physically forced to cross to the East Bank. On the other hand, there are persistent reports of acts of intimidation by Israel armed forces and of Israel attempts to suggest to the population, by loudspeakers mounted on cars, that they, might be better off on the East Bank. There have also been reports that in several localities buses and trucks were put at the disposal of the population for travel to the East Bank.

49. During his visits to several refugee camps on the East Bank, newly displaced persons consistently informed the Special Representative that they had left the West Bank under pressure and that they had suffered many atrocities.

50. The truth seems to lie somewhere between an Israel statement that "no encouragement" was given to the population to flee, and the allegations about the use of brutal force and intimidation made by refugees. The inevitable impact upon a frightened civilian population of hostilities and military occupation as such, particularly when no measures of reassurance are taken, has clearly been a main factor in the exodus from the West Bank.

In particular, writing about the situation in Hebron, the report stated:

85 (j) Movement of population. The Mayor mentioned that before the entry of the Israel troops, an agreement had been reached that no fighting would take place in this area, and that in fact no fighting had taken place. **Yet when the Arab Legion withdrew from the area, people began to flee. Approximately 15,000 to 18,000 out of a population of 150,000 in the area had left. The majority had left before the arrival of the Israel troops; some were still leaving. They had left of their own free will without any pressure from the army. Many had come back, and about 90 per cent of all those who had gone would like to come back. The army treated the population well.** There were about 50,000 Palestinian refugees in the area, out of whom approximately 10,000 left. (Forty per cent of the refugees lived in camps.) [emphasis added]

That is, *according to the Arab mayor of Hebron*, even with the assurance that there would be no fighting, many Hebron residents fled when they understood that the Jordanian army was retreating, and they fled even before seeing any Israeli troops.

The report also featured the following relevant statements from the Israeli authorities:

During the fighting, considerable numbers of inhabitants crossed the Jordan River eastwards. **In many cases they were motivated by fear; but the main impulse was economic: the desire to ensure the continued receipt of money transfers from relatives in other Arab States or of salary payments by the Jordanian Government.** Many of those who left the West Bank were registered with UNRWA as refugees. The certainty that they would continue to receive UNRWA assistance served as encouragement...

Persons who had resided on the West Bank, and who crossed over to the East Bank between 5 June and 4 July 1967, have been permitted to return to the West Bank, under an Israel Government decision adopted as a gesture of goodwill. Arrangements for the return of such persons are being made through the good offices of the International Red Cross. (emphasis added)

That is, the Israelis, in cooperation with the ICRC, arranged for many of those who had fled to return.

It is only by once again ignoring such a preponderance of primary evidence that Walt and Mearsheimer could breezily assure readers that Israel "expelled between 100,000 and 260,000 Palestinians from the newly-conquered West Bank."

With regard to the Golan, the situation was similar. The imposing heights of the Golan region had been turned into a massive armed camp aimed at attacking Israel, and many of the Syrians living there were either soldiers or the families of soldiers. Of the non-military residents, the vast majority were Druse farmers. When it was clear that the war was going badly for Syria, the entire Syrian military infrastructure fled, often without ever seeing an Israeli soldier. Tellingly, the Druse farmers stayed, showing quite clearly that, again, contrary to Walt and Mearsheimer, there were no expulsions.

In a further effort to discredit Israel the authors also compare Israeli democracy unfavorably with U.S. democracy:

The United States is a liberal democracy where people of any race, religion, or ethnicity are supposed to enjoy equal rights. By contrast, Israel was explicitly founded as a Jewish state and citizenship is based on the principle of blood kinship.

It is not clear what the authors mean by "blood kinship." Israel's citizenship laws are quite similar to those of other countries, and do not at all require that the applicant be Jewish or that they convert to Judaism. To cite just one example, hundreds of Vietnamese boat people, some of them rescued on the high seas by Israeli freighters and brought to Israel, were granted full citizenship.

Perhaps the authors are trying to refer to Israel's Law of Return, which is not a citizenship law *per se*, but which does grant individuals of Jewish heritage (and their immediate family) present in Israel greatly expedited citizenship upon application. The heritage required is either that one was born Jewish, or had at least a Jewish grandparent, or – and this is the important part – has converted to Judaism. So, contrary to what the authors may have meant, there is no requirement of "blood kinship."

And, if the authors are going to argue that the Law of Return is somehow racist, they should be aware that quite a few other countries, including democracies, have similar laws, including Greece, Germany, Ireland, Finland, etc.

Finally, the manner in which the authors compare Israel to the United States is striking. The United States, they say, "is a liberal democracy where people of any race, religion, or ethnicity are supposed to enjoy equal rights." So Israel is to be judged on the basis of a falsified reality – falsified anecdotes, or on Sabra and Shatilla (which was not committed by the IDF) – while the U.S. is to be judged not by the reality of what does happen, but by what is "supposed" to happen. The authors reach no conclusions about the moral stature of the United States on the basis of, for example, My Lai, which unfortunately was committed by our soldiers.

This technique, of measuring only Israel by absolute, idealized standards which no country can meet, is a favorite tactic of propagandists. The authors engage in throughout their article.

U.S. aid – to Israel and others

One obvious target for the authors is the supposedly massive level of US aid to Israel.

Since the October War in 1973, Washington has provided Israel with a level of support dwarfing the amounts provided to any other state. It has been the largest annual recipient of direct U.S. economic and military assistance since 1976 and the largest total recipient since World War II. Total direct U.S. aid to Israel amounts to well over \$140 billion in 2003 dollars. Israel receives about \$3 billion in direct foreign assistance each year, which is roughly one-fifth of America's foreign aid budget. In per capita terms, the United States gives each Israeli a direct subsidy worth about \$500 per year. This largesse is especially striking when one realizes that Israel is now a wealthy industrial state with a per capita income roughly equal to South Korea or Spain.

Interesting that the authors mention Israel being a wealthy industrial state, like South Korea. The implication being that South Korea doesn't get huge amounts of U.S. aid, while Israel, supposedly because of the lobby, does, to the tune of about \$3 Billion annually.

However, we have had around 40,000 U.S. soldiers stationed in South Korea for about 50 years. The presence of these troops is a direct subsidy to the South Koreans – because we are there protecting them, they have that much less a defense burden, and we have that much more a defense burden (that is, if we didn't have to defend them, we could have a smaller, less expensive, military). The money that South Korea saves can be used to reduce taxes, or to create, say, a car industry, or a steel industry, or a chip industry, producing goods which they can then sell to the U.S., and jobs that they can take from the U.S. All subsidized by the U.S. taxpayer. And what do those troops and their equipment and other related items cost the U.S.? About \$3 Billion a year. (source: *New York Times*, Jan. 8, 2003)

And what of the defense of Japan and the rest of East Asia (excluding South Korea)? Perhaps another \$40 Billion. Same consequences as above, just multiplied by a factor of 13.

Which brings us to the defense of Western Europe – aka our more-than-60-year NATO commitment. That runs to about a third of the defense budget, roughly \$80 Billion a year. Same consequences as for Korea, just multiplied by a factor of around 26.

Now, none of the above is to argue that the above money is wasted, or that we derive no benefits from carrying the defense burden of so much of the developed world. Maybe we do, and maybe we don't. But these are gigantic costs that truly dwarf what we spend on aid to Israel. About these costs, and the benefits or lack thereof to the "interests" of the United States, the authors are silent – a silence that is truly deafening.

Misleading by omission – the Saudis

The authors also mislead by what they omit, such as the documented power of the Saudis and the other oil states to directly influence U.S. policy, thanks to their great wealth and their control of oil. Also omitted is the Saudi use of powerful, influential U.S. corporations that do business in the Gulf, such as Bechtel, as their agents of influence.

Another omission is the massive Saudi investment in U.S. colleges and universities, including Harvard, which recently received a gift of \$20 Million from Saudi Prince Alwaleed Bin Talal to create a University-wide program on Islamic studies.

Other problems

The authors also make numerous other false and misleading claims, including bogus allegations about CAMERA (plus they get our name wrong):

the pro-Israel Committee for Accurate Middle East Reporting in America (CAMERA) organized demonstrations outside National Public Radio stations in 33 cities in May 2003, and it also tried to convince contributors to withhold support from NPR until its Middle East coverage became more sympathetic to Israel.

In fact, CAMERA (The Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America) did not organize the demonstrations outside NPR stations. They were organized by a woman named Diana Muir, independently of CAMERA. And CAMERA does not want coverage more "sympathetic" to Israel, we want coverage that is fair, accurate and balanced.

Besides those already discussed, there is also at least one more claim by the authors with a bogus reference:

Pro-Israel forces have long been interested in getting the U.S. military more directly involved in the Middle East, so it could help protect Israel.

They support this extremely dubious claim with footnote 181, which lists only one reference, a report, [*Rebuilding America's Defenses: Strategy, Forces and Resources for a New Century*](#).

This report is easily searched, and it mentions Israel only once:

Ever since the Persian Gulf War of 1991, when an Iraqi Scud missile hit a Saudi warehouse in which American soldiers were sleeping, causing the largest single number of casualties in the war; when Israeli and Saudi citizens donned gas masks in nightly terror of Scud attacks; and when the great "Scud Hunt" proved to be an elusive game that absorbed a huge proportion of U.S. aircraft, the value of the ballistic missile has been clear to America's adversaries. (p 51)

Obviously this report offers no support whatsoever for the claim that Israel wants the U.S. to fight its battles. Whether this is a careless mistake, or something more serious, it only further undermines the credibility of the authors.

Conclusions

The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy is a deep embarrassment to both Harvard University and the University of Chicago. While Mearsheimer and Walt are free to make any assertions they like, no matter how baseless, Harvard University should have nothing to do with such shoddy, biased work. Judged just by the quality of its argumentation and its originality, it is at best third-rate.

Harvard should remove the report from its website – and therefore remove from the report the Harvard imprimatur – until the authors fix its manifold deficiencies.

revised 04/06/2006

